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## DIVERSE TOPICS.

### PROFESSOR HAECKEL'S MONISM.

There are two Latin proverbs which are both good rules for controversialists who seek for the truth on different roads. The one reads: *In verbis simus faciles dummodo conveniamus in re*, the other reads: *In verbis simus difficiles ut conveniamus in re*. A difference of terms often prevents two thinkers from noticing that they actually agree. Therefore let us be lenient in terms and never lose sight of their meaning and purport. On the other hand terms are not indifferent, and the selection of terms should not be regarded as arbitrary. In order to arrive at a solid and permanent agreement, permanent because it is based upon objectively demonstrable truth, we have to be scrupulously careful with our terminology; and we must not allow the arbitrary employment of terms where they are inappropriate. An inappropriate usage of terms will lead us astray and involve us in confusion and error.

Says Professor Haeckel :

"The divergences which exhibit themselves in our respective unitary conceptions of the world are in part only apparent and in part occasioned by the divergent significances of our fundamental ideas."

This seems to me very true and, indeed, I have very good evidence that it is true. Professor Haeckel writes in his letter to me :

"I have marked in *red* those passages of your kind review of my 'Anthropogeny' in which I agree with you and in *blue* those in which I differ."

Now I find all those passages where I should have anticipated an objection on Professor Haeckel's part marked red, while a blue mark appears where in my opinion there is only a difference of terminology. It is the following sentence on page 441 :

"Psychic life is absent so far as we can see in the primordial world-substance as it appears in the form of a nebula ; it is absent still in the primordial state of planets. It appears with the subjective states of awareness that rise into existence in organised life. The subjectivity of unorganised matter is, in comparison with man's subjectivity, to be considered as a blank ; i. e., if there is in it a state of awareness, which we have reasons to doubt, it is apparently without meaning ; it

does not symbolise external objects; it is no mind; it is, as it were, blind. Yet the aim of evolution being the development of psychical life, shows that the subjectivity of unorganised matter is spiritual in its innermost nature."

This difference is probably a difference of terminology only, for I insist most strongly on the doctrine that all nature is alive. However, I make a difference between "life" and "soul." Nature is alive throughout, but it is not ensouled; the action of chemical elements and of the falling stone are no psychical actions.\*

Another blue stroke appears at the following passage:

"We grant willingly that mechanical explanations will serve for all motions that take place in the world; even the motions of the brain take place in strict obedience to the laws of molar and molecular mechanics. But a mechanical explanation is not applicable to that which is not motion. If it were applicable it would not be desirable, for it would be of no avail. Mechanical explanations are to be limited to mechanical phenomena. Feeling however is not a mechanical phenomenon, and an idea, being a special and a very complex kind of a feeling, or rather and more accurately expressed, being the special meaning of a very complex feeling, is not a mechanical phenomenon either."

The subsequent sentences are again approved by Professor Haeckel; they are marked red:

"It is true that when a feeling takes place and when an idea is thought in the brain of an organised being, that a certain nervous action takes place. The nervous action is a motion and this motion represents a definite amount of energy. There is no theoretical difficulty, although there are almost insurmountable practical difficulties, in measuring the definite amount of potential energy that is changed into kinetic energy when a man thinks. Yet the brain-motion is not the idea and by a mechanical explanation of the brain-motion we have not even touched the problem of what the nature of the idea is, why ideas originate and how they act."

We do not understand how Professor Haeckel can object to the view that ideas and feelings are no motions. We fully grant that the nervous action that takes place when an idea is thought is a motion, and that, considered as a brain-action, it is mechanically explainable. But by feeling we understand not the brain-action but a state of awareness, and states of awareness are not objective phenomena, they are subjective phenomena; whereby we do not at all deny that there are no feelings which must not in their objective existence at the same time be supposed to be brain-motions.

Feelings are not motions but ideas are still less motions. Ideas are the meanings which certain feelings that are representative of certain sets of experiences have acquired. Is the meaning of a word a motion? Can the significance of words be mechanically explained? The meaning of ideas, the significance of words, the representativeness of feelings are phenomena which have nothing to do with motions but constitute a domain of their own.

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\* We intend to express our views more fully in a special article to be published in a subsequent number of *The Monist*.

Professor Haeckel in our opinion can mean only that there are no feelings in themselves, but all our feelings are at the same time brain-motions, and as such they are mechanical phenomena. We have to add, however, that an explanation of the mechanism of brain-action does not as yet explain the significance of mental operations.

Professor Haeckel insists so strongly upon his view of monism as being mechanicalism that this seems to mark a difference in our conceptions which might be of consequence.

I was very glad to notice the long strokes of red along the passages which contain my proposition that "the evolution of organised life is a natural process having a definite aim"; further, along the paragraphs concerning the world-order as being moral in so far as the world-order is the basis of morality, and also those which represent God as being that power of the world-order obedience to which is called morality.

Professor Haeckel's agreement with these passages indicates that those expressions of his to which we should take exception, and which he employs again in his article of the present number, might not be regarded as divergences.

Professor Haeckel's definition of God appears to us insufficient, and also his definition of immortality.

God is not only the sum-total of matter and force, God is also that quality of the world which the naturalist describes in natural laws. God is the life of the world, he is that feature of existence which makes mind and knowledge possible. In addition he is that which men call progress, the ideal of the future that lives in our souls and the principle of evolution in nature.

There is a deeper truth too in the doctrine of immortality. There is a conservation of matter and energy, but there is also a preservation of soul. Says Professor Haeckel, "the human soul is a very highly developed vertebral soul." If that is so, the soul of our fossil ancestors continues to live in us. This soul has been altered, it is true, but the alterations are not so much a loss as a gain. The alterations consist in the additional growth of new powers and represent a higher development. All that which was worth preserving has been preserved.

And as it has been in the past, so we can confidently expect that it will be in the future. All that is worth preserving of our souls will be preserved in the ages to come. Our souls will live and develop to higher possibilities. They will be transmitted from generation to generation, advancing on the unlimited path of evolutionary progress.

P. C.

#### THE RELIGION OF SCIENCE.

There was during the last winter great excitement in Germany, concerning a new school-bill proposed by the chancellor Caprivi, and the late Prussian minister of cultus, Zedlitz-Trützschler. This school-bill proposed to take the direction of the public schools out of the hands of scientific men and transfer it to the